Number of Americans With Dementia Expected to Double by 2040

Women will account for nearly two thirds of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias and bear most of the costs.

November 14, 2019 By Alicia Green

A new report by the Milken Institute estimates that the number of Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will double to more than 13 million within the next 20 years, according to a recent news release.

By 2020, researchers project that roughly 4.7 million women in the United States will suffer from dementia, accounting for nearly two thirds of all people with the illness. (In 2020, 2.6 million men will be living with dementia.) By 2040, scientists expect the number of adults living with dementia to double to 8.5 million women and 4.5 million men.

What's more, experts say the economic burden of dementia will surpass $2 trillion over the next 20 years, and women will bear more than 80% of the cumulative costs.

"Longer life spans are perhaps one of the greatest success stories of our modern public health system," said Nora Super, senior director of the Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging and lead author of the report. "But along with this success comes one of our greatest challenges. Our risk of developing dementia doubles every five years after we turn 65. By age 85, nearly one in three of us will have the disease."

Super and her report coauthors—in collaboration with supporting organizations such as UsAgainstAlzheimer's, AARP and Bank of America—developed a list of detailed recommendations and goals for policymakers, businesses and communities to improve brain health, reduce disparities and hopefully change the course of dementia.

Goals include promoting strategies to maintain and improve brain health for all ages, genders and across diverse populations; increasing access to cognitive testing and early diagnosis; expanding opportunities for diverse participation in research and prioritizing funding to address health disparities; building a dementia-capable workforce across the care continuum; and establishing services and policies that encourage supportive communities and workplaces for people with dementia and their caregivers.

Since there's no cure in sight, "we must double down on efforts to reduce the cost and risk of dementia," Super said.

The researchers suggested that people can begin with lifestyle changes to improve their health through better diet, exercise and sleep.

For related coverage, read "Number of Older Adults with Alzheimer's and Related Dementias to Double by 2060."

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